

Hechinger Mall/Old Sears Sites (Bladensburg Avenue to 17th Street)

Introduction

Plans for the Hechingers Mall/Old Sears Sites focus on the on-going improvement of the existing retail outlets and the attraction of new development on the Old Sears Site that serves neighborhood needs and complements the mix of uses on H Street. The plan supports the development of this site for either residential or commercial use so long as the design is sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood.

Development Program

The Plan presents two options for this district: one with the Old Sears site in commercial use and the other with site in residential use. The development programs for each option, share the following assumptions:

- Hechingers Mall (210,000 square feet) remains and is upgraded;
- CVS (15,000 square feet) remains;
- new commercial buildings accommodating a total of 25,000 square feet of space, are added to the Hechingers Mall and CVS sites; and
- no existing buildings are removed.

A review of each option follows:

- Program Option A: Residential Use of Old Sears Site—This option for the Old Sears site Residential medium-density development with convenience retail at

the ground level. The developer has suggested that the buildings could be four stories tall with structured parking on the interior of the site. The illustrative plan shows this as a perimeter-block multi-family design, meeting the urban demands of the important streets and offering a park (above the parking structure) on the interior:

- Program Option B – Large Box Retailer: Market research and position of the site make the potential for one, large retail box a possible scenario for the development of the site. The illustrative plan shows an approximately 35,000 to 45,000 square feet one-story building with surface parking calculated for normative suburban retail conditions. (Introduction of a larger big box retailer of 55,000 to 80,000 square feet would require either that the store be constructed on two levels (no longer considered an impossibility by national chains, but more costly to operate than conventional suburban sites and far from common in the industry) and/or that structured parking would be required to support the needed number of spaces (also a higher than usual cost, if compared to suburban sites).

Generally, it is expected that either use will provide small, indirect benefits to retailers on H Street. Residential use will result in only a small increase in demand for retail on H Street and distance to the Central Retail District are great enough to assume the project will significantly add to pedestrian traffic along the corridor.

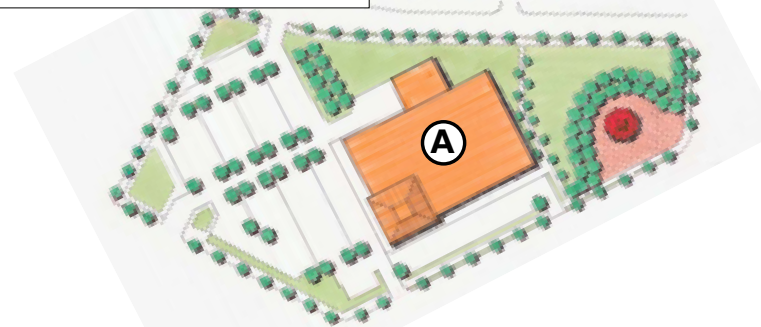
The market impact on H Street retailers of a new 'big-box' store on the Old Sears site would be indirect rather than direct. Because of the prevailing pedestrian shopper behaviors (consumers are reluctant to walk more than 1,200 to 1,500 feet as part of a shopping experience), neither site would comfortably be a 'walk-to' location from the proposed Main Street core area along the central portion of H Street. It is more likely that introduction of one or more Big Box retailers at the eastern or western ends of the corridor would help in recapturing a large share of District-based expenditures which are currently 'leaking' out of the District to these types of stores in Northern Virginia (particularly to the Potomac Yards 'Big Box' mall near Alexandria on Route 1) or to stores located in Prince Georges County. Recapturing these 'lost' expenditures would also increase pass through traffic along H Street as they would generate what the retail industry calls 'inflow', defined as a retail use that is a strong enough destination that customers will seek it/them out and are willing to travel further than the distance that the more proximate markets (motivated by convenience) would be willing to go.

These recovered sales, largely from District of Columbia residents from Capitol Hill and other neighborhoods in NE and NW Washington, would attract more people driving to the destination Big Box stores along the H Street corridor; increasing the level of exposure for locally owned and Mom-and-Pop businesses located in the more

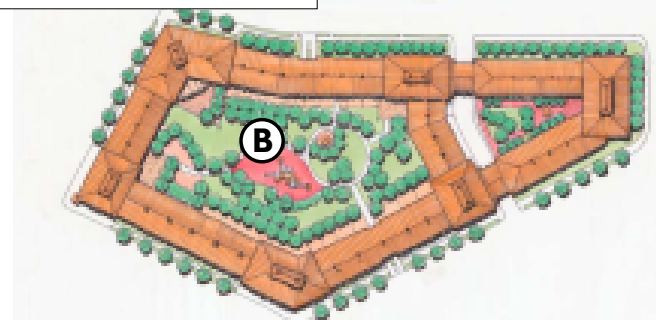


pedestrian-oriented central portion of H Street. While it may be argued that destination retailers may not generate sales in specialty shops and restaurants on the same trip as their Big Box visit, the exposure could foster another shopping trip later as more and more customers become familiar with the H Street corridor. Therefore, the benefits of introducing/recruiting Big Box retailers to H Street is less direct, but would build customer traffic from other parts of the area which would be less likely to come to H Street at all without the Big Box destinations.

OPTION A: BIG-BOX RETAIL



OPTION B: RESIDENTIAL



Recommendations

Option A: Big Box Retail (A). Should the site be designated for retail use, care must be taken to ensure neighborhood impact is minimized. Specific site and building design recommendations for the property are included in the design guidelines.

Option B: Residential (B). Should the site be designated for residential use, the project should follow an urban form of development, with the buildings pulled to the street, mid-block parking, and direct access to individual units from the street. Specific site and building design recommendations for the property are included in the design guidelines.

Streetscape Improvements. From an urban perspective, the building could be considered a contributor to the public realm if it provides at least two sides of active storefronts and presents a quality building elevation to the principal streets.

Long Term Infill. At each of the corners of the intersection, building forms are proposed to help give shape to the space. Currently devoid of assigned program, the buildings could be a long term planning consideration that helps define the area as a gateway to the Corridor.